



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE
TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

**STATEMENT BY MONSIGNOR MICHAEL W. BANACH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HOLY SEE,
AT THE 739th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

13 NOVEMBER 2008

**RE: REPORT BY THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE AND
CO-ORDINATOR FOR COMBATING TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS**

Mr. Chairman,

1. The Delegation of the Holy See willingly joins the previous speakers in warmly welcoming the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Ms. Eva Biaudet, and thanks her for her *tour de horizon* of the activities and priorities of her Office.

2. The scourge of trafficking in human beings is a multi-dimensional social phenomenon of misery, poverty, greed, corruption, injustice and oppression which manifests itself in sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, and the recruitment of minors for armed conflict. We know well that the root causes of this phenomenon include economic factors, such as the imbalance between rural and urban wealth levels and the desperate desire to escape poverty. Juridical and political factors also contribute to the problem, such as the absence of legislation, and the ignorance of parents and trafficked persons of their rights under the law. Mistrust of the law and open borders likewise play a part, as do socio-cultural factors, such as the social acceptability of putting children to work outside of the family, illiteracy or low education levels, acceptance of debt bondage and discrimination against girls. Globalization and the increased movement of people can also make vulnerable groups, such as women and girls, easier prey for traffickers, who clearly have no regard for the dignity of the human person, and who view people as mere commodities to be bought and sold, used and abused at will.

There is a further aspect which must be acknowledged and collectively addressed if this abhorrent human exploitation is to be effectively confronted. I am referring to the trivialization of sexuality in the media and entertainment industries which fuels a decline in moral values and leads to the degradation of men and women, the weakening of fidelity in marriage and even the abuse of children.

3. Acknowledging the right to compensation for victims, and the creation of compensation schemes; the punishment of individuals and groups who exploit victims, including the confiscation of profits and property obtained through trafficking activities; the adoption of legislation and consequently enforcement, including workplace inspections; further reflection on macro-economic measures, and the implementation of policies which allow third country nationals to enter countries and work, according to the demand of labour in that country, must all be part and parcel of ongoing efforts to combat trafficking in persons.

4. The Holy See is pleased to note that in many different countries the Church is involved in assisting victims, offering support to escape from sexual violence and forced labour, and reaching out to child soldiers, creating safe houses, providing counselling services aimed at integration into society and helping them to return in a sustainable way to their home country. Moreover, prevention and awareness activities are being carried out, in particular, by congregations of women religious. Catholic agencies such as *Caritas* and *COATNET* (Catholic Network Against Trafficking in Women), for example, have recently developed strategic frameworks focusing on emergency situations, peace building, human development, and confederated structures which include a pro-active commitment to combat trafficking of persons in all its forms, including by advocating for the rights and for the protection of trafficked persons, for effective anti-trafficking legislation and measures, for effective reinforcement of such legislation and measures; by advocating for migration policies and economic policies that reduce vulnerability of people to trafficking, and by networking with authorities, churches, and with relevant actors in international civil society, to elaborate jointly effective partnerships to challenge the phenomenon of human trafficking .

5. In conclusion, Mister Chairman, my Delegation would like to underscore the commitment of the Catholic Church to uphold the dignity of every human life, especially the most vulnerable. And I would like to assure Ms. Biaudet of our full support in her efforts to eliminate the scourge of trafficking, in particular of women and children, prostitution, and forced labour.

Thank you, Mister Chairman!